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ABSTRACT

If teenagers do not find support at school, home, or in the community, then they will find it with peers, gangs, or other means. Subsequently, the importance of extra-curricular involvement for at-risk youth is reported in this paper; to what extent this involvement had potential to influence performance in academics is also examined. Involvement in community-based programs and involvement in activities within the home, especially parent-children interactions, were also investigated. Participants (N=20) were interviewed to determine the students' involvement with school-related activities, such as sports, and involvement in church, music, scouts, clubs, sororities, and neighborhood groups. Results from these interviews indicate that family, school-sponsored extra-curricular activities, and community activities all had a significant impact on the academic engagement, performance, and socio-emotional growth of these adolescents. Findings also suggest that many parents feel alienated from high schools, are unable to comprehend the academic work, and are unable to offer much assistance with homework. It is suggested that schools invite parents into the schools and use extra-curricular activities to enhance students' academic commitment. The report includes a questionnaire on parental involvement, lists some characteristics of at-risk learners, and offers strategies for teachers. (RJM)

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MID-SOUTH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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IMPACT OF SCHOOL-RELATED, COMMUNITY-BASED, AND PARENTAL-INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES ON ACHIEVEMENT OF AT-RISK YOUTH IN THE HIGH SCHOOL SETTING

This research was conducted over the course of last year's school term at a local high school. It addressed the question as to how important extra-curricular involvement was to at-risk youth and to what extent this involvement had potential to influence performance in the academic realm. Involvement in school-related activities, community-based activity involvement, and activities within the home setting which involved parents with their children were investigated. Interviews and other qualitative data sources were used.

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Impact of School-Related, Community-Based, and Parental-Involvement Activities on Achievement of At-Risk Youth in the High School Setting

After working for many years with at-risk students, we believe that students will seek support somewhere. If they do not have support at school, home, or in the community in organizations, then they will find it with their peers or in gangs, or by other means. Teenagers need support and will find it in some way. This belief is what prompted our study.

This research was conducted over the course of last year's school term at a local high school. It addressed the question as to how important extra-curricular involvement was to at-risk youth and to what extent this involvement had potential to influence performance in the academic realm. Involvement in school-related activities, community-based activity involvement, and activities within the home setting which involved parents with their children were investigated. Interviews and other qualitative data sources were used.

Initially there were seventy possible subject. These students were asked to have their parents sign a permission form which would allow them to participate in this study. A number of the forms were returned with the request for permission denied. This was interpreted as an indication of a basic lack of trust by the parents toward this type of research. Other forms were never returned. They were either not taken home or else they were never returned to school. This indicated a lack of responsibility on the part of the student. Ultimately there were twenty students who participated in the study.

These twenty students were all freshmen ranging in age from 14 to 16 and they were all enrolled in a reading class. There were 18 African-Americans and 2 Caucasians. Fifty percent were on the free lunch program. Twelve subjects were females and the other 8 were males.

Findings

The participants were interviewed by the teacher using a questionnaire. The questions were designed to determine the students' involvement with school-related activities such as sports, church, music, scouts, clubs, sororities, and neighborhood groups. It was also designed to measure the level of parental involvement that each subject had experienced. Responses were categorized as Low, Medium, or High depending upon specific content. Results of the survey are included on the next page.

STUDENT DATA FROM RESEARCH STUDY

Subject	Grade	Age	Race	Community Involvement	Parental Involvement	School Involvement	Gender	Self Esteem	Absences	Grades
1	9	15	B	M	H	L	F	M	37	42/F
2	9	15	B	H	H	H	M	H	4	74/P
3	9	16	C	L	L	L	M	L	52	0/F
4	9	15	B	H	H	L	M	H	7	78/P
5	9	16	B	M	L	L	M	M	16	67/F
6	9	15	C	L	M	L	F	L	31	37/f
7	9	15	B	M	M	L	F	M	7	70/P
8	9	15	B	L	H	M	M	H	8	78/P
9	9	15	B	H	H	H	F	H	5	83/P
10	9	14	B	H	L	H	F	M	13	85/P
11	9	14	B	H	H	L	M	H	9	71/P
12	9	15	B	L	L	L	F	M	3	70/P
13	9	15	B	M	L	L	F	H	6	70/P
14	9	15	B	L	L	H	M	M	2	79/P
15	9	15	B	H	L	L	F	M	8	80/P
16	9	14	B	L	M	L	F	M	5	83/P
17	9	15	B	M	L	L	F	H	16	76/P
18	9	15	B	L	L	L	M	M	0	70/P
19	9	16	B	M	H	H	F	H	6	85/P
20	9	15	B	L	L	L	F	H	9	64/F

A multiple regression analysis was used to determine if any of these variables which included absence, gender, self-esteem, community involvement, parental involvement, and school involvement might be a predictor of success in the reading class. The results of the analysis indicated that attendance had a significant impact on the course grade. The other remaining variables, however, were not significant at the .05 probability level. This may have been due to the small number of subjects participating in the study. Factors that influence course grades and significance of F are as follows:

FACTORS	SIGNIFICANCE OF F
Absence	.005
Gender	.083
Community Involvement	.091
Self-Esteem	.133
School Involvement	.528
Parental Involvement	.597

Implications

Although the qualitative results of the multiple regression analysis were inconclusive, qualitative data emerging from informal conversations and open-ended interview questions with these students indicated that the three targeted areas: (1) family, (2) school-sponsored extra-curricular activities, (3) and community activities had a significant impact on the academic engagement, performance, and socio-emotional growth of these adolescents in school.

Therefore, qualitative findings of our study agreed with other research data supporting, in general, the conclusion that parental involvement and parents' actions had positive impact on student growth levels. Also, extra-curricular activities enhanced school performance and socio-emotional growth as did community-based activity involvement.

Implications for practice of the findings warrant discussion.

Many parents feel alienated from high schools. They are unable to comprehend the academic work and unable to offer much assistance with homework. Their feelings, combined with teen-agers need for independence, often causes them to limit contact with school or efforts to monitor students' academic progress.

Parent advisory councils, parent-teacher associations, parent booster clubs for extra-curricular events, more wide-spread use of parents as chaperones and sponsors for social events, and so on emerge as significant. Back-to-school night classes in Spanish or Asian

languages may increase attendance. These efforts to bring parents into the schools must be accompanied by efforts to educate parents in effective parenting and discipline strategies, in appropriate methods of monitoring their child's activities, and in productive responses to their child's performance in classes. Meetings, brochures, and communication through networking is a must. **Therefore, schools must double existing efforts in parental involvement and parent education.**

Schools can also take a strong hand in shaping extra-curricular programs to enhance students' academic commitments. Contact with adults serving as positive role models outside of the classroom, eligibility requirements, or glimpses of future career possibilities may motivate students to work more in school. Peer interactions such as the sharing of personal resources and offering of support for achievement were indicated benefits of extra-curricular involvement impacting in a positive manner members' attitudes and achievement levels.

Extracurricular participation in school activities such as leadership, clubs, and interest groups (excluding "glory" sports or "work") was associated with positive school outcomes. Interestingly enough, background differences between participants became less noticeable and diversity issues were addressed as a cooperative spirit emerged through group affiliation. As a **result, schools must support and coordinate extra-curricular activities to enhance students' academic commitments and socio-emotional growth.**

Community-based activities and involvement with society many times has a positive impact on youth including alienated youth. Many students become more sensitive to societal concerns and employers' needs through community involvement.

Schools may assume an advisory role for students seeking part-time employment. Counseling sessions could be initiated for students seeking school endorsement of a work permit. Sessions could caution students about the academic risks of extensive work hours and advise them on time management strategies, decision-making skills, and the like. Information regarding various organizations utilizing students in different capacities might be made available to students seeking volunteer work.

Schools in general and teachers of classes in particular ought to form stronger partnerships with local business and agencies that employ their students as volunteers or employees. Interest and cooperation of faculty must be encouraged in order to develop specific student community service/work programs with an academic component bringing together community and school through volunteerism or employment. School personnel would become more sensitive to employers' needs and frustrations while at the same time alerting employers of the academic risks that work schedules present for students. It is imperative that

schools study the importance of academically-based community service programs and part-time employment possibilities to provide students with opportunity to integrate classroom theory with real-world practice.

It is time to develop school, family, and community partnerships to promote students' academic success and socio-emotional growth. Youth in general, and at-risk youth in particular, are in need of this supportive measure. Schools are not to take on this responsibility alone. Instead, schools assume the responsibility of coordinating the efforts of all three spheres involved in the partnership to enhance students' development, learning, and success in school and later life.

We think the intervention that is needed is mentoring from positive, caring, responsible adults who are good role models. These mentors need to come from somewhere--the community, parents, or the school. Research indicates that students benefit from involvement. Frequently, for many students the only available source for these relationships is the school. Although this is a different message from the trend in education today to get back to the basics and trim the frills in education, it may be that extra-curricular activities are a vital part of any intervention effort to advance students' social, emotional, and academic development toward the goal of becoming successful citizens.

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

NAME_____ DATE_____

SEX: Male _____Female_____ AGE_____ GRADE_____
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT____

SCHOOL RELATED ACTIVITIES

SPORTS: Football Basketball Wrestling Track Baseball Other_____

MUSIC: Band Chorus Other _____

CLUBS:_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

SPORTS:

CHURCH:

MUSIC:

SCOUTS:

CLUBS:

SORORITY:

NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS:

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Describe your family

Do your parents expect you to share in responsibilities at home?
If so --what?

How many times a week does you family eat together?

Do you talk together at this time?

If so, what about?

Do parents monitor out of school activities?
How?

If no, did they when you were younger?

Do you have a curfew?
What time?

Do your parents set limits on TV programs you watch?_____ On the time you watch TV?
Did they when you were younger?

Do your parents talk with you about school?

What do you talk with them about?

Do you like to read? What?

Where do you get materials for reading?

Does a newspaper come to your house? Magazines?

Do you have a library card? Do you use it much?

Does your family use the library?

Did they read to you when you were younger?
How much? Do you have homework? Do your parents help you with it?

How much? When you were younger, did they?

Do your parents encourage you to complete homework?

How many visits has your parent made to school?

Do they stay in touch with your teachers?

Did they when you were younger?
How much and how often?

Do your parents encourage you to do well in school?

How do they encourage? Money? Reward? Punishment if you do not?

What do you do on week-days after school?
On weekends?

What is your favorite activity?

Do you participate with parents in doing activities? What kind?

Describe your participation in school functions.
What do you like best? Least?

Do you have a set time to study? A certain place?

Are you popular in school? Why?
Do you date?

Do you consider yourself to be good, average, or a poor student?

What could the school or teacher do that could help you most to be successful?

What do you plan to do after high school?

What do your parents want you to do?

What would you like to do 10 years from now?

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF AT-RISK LEARNERS

1. High absenteeism and tardiness:
   - No tomorrow
   - No yesterday
   - Negative, fatalistic sense of doom
   - Today is their only time frame; they have no sense of time.
2. Poor time management
   - Irresponsible behavior regarding assignments and tests
   - No sense of delayed gratification.
   - I want it now! (without work!)
   - Most have no experiences relating to positive work ethic.
3. Never learned how to learn
   - No study skills
   - Poor vocabulary and communications skills
   - Poor test taking skills
   - High test anxiety
   - Inattentive in class
4. No sense of cause and effect
   - How can what happened yesterday impact today?
   - How are today's actions important tomorrow?
   - Success is due to good luck, not the individual's efforts.
5. No sense of self-esteem
   - Pervasive sense of worthlessness
   - They are surrounded by "non-success" that reinforces this.
6. No Parental support
   - No motivation/drive to do anything, even actions that are beneficial
   - Non-existent or negative decision-making skills
7. No sense of responsibility or external locus of control
   - No effort because of fear of failure, learned helplessness
   - "If I fail, it's not my fault; I knew it wouldn't work anyway."
8. No anger management or temper control
   - instant anger into a fury that feeds on itself
   - the loudest is the most right
   - It's fight or flight at its purest.
9. No laughter for joy or mirth
   - laughter involves sneering, jeering at the misfortune of others
   - little or no sense of humor
   - No wit or play on words (They do not get it!)
10. Victims of rampant abuse
    - sexual, physical, psychological or emotional (perhaps all three)
    - reflective of anger, but not kindness
    - They interpret kindness as weakness which is viewed as having no authority or control.

Compiled by:
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STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

Multiple learning styles

Teaching students about challenge, competition, cooperation

Teaching students about acceptance of criticism using intrinsic motivation

Forming a student-teacher alliance

Teaching concentration techniques

Learning anti-arguing routines

Giving children an audience

HOME STRATEGIES

Building study routines

Bedtime and morning independence routines

Organizational and attention techniques

United parenting with respect and support for schools and teachers

Rimm, Sylvia B. (1997). "An Underachievement Epidemic." *Educational Leadership* 54, 7: 18-22.

Summary

The impact of three influences----family, school-sponsored extra-curricular activities, community-based activities----on the achievement patterns and social well-being of at risk high school students was examined. The specific purpose was to identify the specific processes in each of the three areas by which students' academic engagement and performance and socio-emotional growth are increased or diminished.

Findings of our study agreed with other research data supporting, in general, the conclusion that parental involvement and parents' actions had impact on student growth levels. Extra-curricular activities enhanced school performance and socio-emotional growth as did community-based activity involvement.

Implications for practice of the findings:

Needed: School, Family, and Community Partnerships

1. Schools must double efforts in parental involvement and parent education.

Many parents feel alienated from high schools. They are unable to comprehend the academic work and unable to offer much assistance with homework. Their feelings, combined with teen-agers need for independence, often causes them to limit contact with school or efforts to monitor students' academic progress.

2. Schools must support and coordinate extracurricular activities to enhance students' academic commitments.

Schools can also take a strong hand in shaping extracurricular programs to enhance students' academic commitments. Contact with adults, eligibility requirements, or glimpses of future career possibilities may motivate students to work more in school.

3. Schools must study the importance of academically-based community service programs to provide students with opportunity to integrate classroom theory with real-world practice.

Community-based activities and involvement with society many times have a positive impact on youth including alienated youth. Many students become more sensitive to societal concerns and employers' needs through community involvement.

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